

# Life on a Chain

By Margaret LaTour

We've all seen it. Maybe there is even one or more in your own neighborhood – the dog left chained for eternity or death, whichever comes first.

SPDR has received MANY calls from concerned neighbors about the "chained purebred dog next door," asking us to do something.

By law, we can do nothing. It isn't against the law to keep a dog chained, but it should be. The law should come under "dog abuse."

Chaining is mostly restricted to larger breeds but by no means excludes smaller breeds. The Rescue's reps have dealt with many dogs who have done time on a chain, large and small.

## Why is a Chain Abusive?

Dogs are social animals, needing to be with their human families. Being chained outside isolates them and denies them this basic need. The dog quickly becomes neglected and its intellect must find other outlets – for instance, digging, chewing, barking, nervous pacing, and aggression, all for which the dog will be punished.

The behavior of the chained dog is a result of fear. S/he is exposed to danger, real or imagined, and cannot run away or defend. This dog lives in a world of terror. The dog can see its outer territory – the house, other parts of the yard – and cannot defend it. This

drives them to intensify defense of the small area they occupy, the perimeter of the chain. Many people have been bitten by a chained dog.

The chained dog receives little or no positive, loving attention. What they do get from people is teasing, taunting, poisoning, thrown rocks, and more terror. Since the chained dog is exposed to whatever comes by, s/he becomes, in the words of Dennis Fetko, Ph.D., "defensively aggressive. The chain/tether also promotes attack by triggering an opposition reflex (thigmotaxis)."

Living life on a chain is also dangerous. I recently grief-counseled a man who had tied up his 11 month old female German Shepherd in his yard and went into his house. Thirty minutes later, he found his dog hanged to death on the other side of the fence. Another 14-month-old female German Shepherd

was brought to the Bellevue Humane Society for attempting the same maneuver. Besides this danger, there is the very real chance of attack from stray dogs, coyotes, or raccoons. The chained dog cannot get away.

Also, physical injury can result from the chain or rope itself—neck injury, injury to the trachea or larynx, or to the teeth from chewing on the chain. Herniated disks can occur from pulling against the tension.

The chained dog always remains exposed to the whims of people outside. A person intent on robbing the house or hurting its occupants is aided by the chain. Also, a person who intends to injure the dog has no obstacle.

Dogs belong in homes with their families. Any applicant coming through SPDR applying for a dog that will be chained is denied. These are just a few reasons why.



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